



Fairest of Them All (Fairy Tales #3)

Teresa Medeiros

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From the spellbinding pen of nationally bestselling author Teresa Medeiros comes this enchanting new romance—a tale of adventure, humor, and tender sensuality that sweeps from the pageantry of an English jousting tournament to the brooding mystery of an isolated castle in Wales...

Fairest of Them All

She was rumored to be the fairest woman in all of England. But Holly de Chastel considered her beauty a curse. She had already turned away scores of suitors with various ruses, both fair and foul. Now she was to be the prize in a tournament of eager knights gathering from across the land, each more determined than the last to win her hand. Holly had no intention of wedding any of them, and concocted her most outrageous plan yet: to disguise her beauty from their avaricious eyes. But she never planned on Sir Austyn of Gavenmore.

The darkly handsome Welshman had come looking especially for a plain bride, and Holly seemed to fit the bill. Suddenly she found herself in the possession of this mysterious stranger, ensconced in his castle, and forced to keep up her carefully planned illusion. Why did this electrifyingly passionate male, who could have any woman he wanted, desire a homely bride—and what would happen when he learned he'd been tricked? By the time Holly found out, it was too late to avoid the searing fires of passion—and the dark curse of Gavenmore.

Fairest of Them All (Fairy Tales #3) Details

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????α [Punya Reviews...] says

My review contains spoilers and they're mostly my thoughts as I went with the book. This one's got 3 parts.

This book is one of my most fav Teresa Medeiros medieval. I ADORED this one.

So far, 7/8 chps, I found some parts hilarious, some good and some ... stupid! Ok, I don't dislike Holly. She isn't that vain which is a good thing and 'fair' doesn't always have to be blond, something I appreciated in this book because I expected her to have 'gold spun hair and baby blue eyes' ... well, never mind that. The thing is, this disguise thing isn't working for me ... How can a medieval woman, who is so well-known for her beauty, makes herself 'ugly' with black powder in her teeth and face and ... oh, I don't know, are the people around her blind? Was the disguise that good? Leaves me with questions, a lot of them. And she wants to continue it, if the reviews here say something, she will continue it for a long time! *sigh* Already having doubts about this one.

I like Austyn, as I like any burly, bear of a man. Tall, and big and ... well, hubba!

Let's see how much of this farce I can take.

On the 2nd part now, I'm gobbling it up, loving it so much. It's going fast, I'm hooked ... yada yada yada ... Ok, the disguise was kinda annoying but I liked what happened next ... Really, I lurveeee Austyn. I know some find him brutish, I don't. He's a babe with dark hair and blue eyes and I didn't think he really wants to harm Holly in anyway. He was already in love with Holly, so was Holly with him when it was all revealed and now this misunderstanding ... The consummation, which also made me sigh with a 'oh my!' ;) ... Well, I'm loving their crazy chemistry. The prologue was kinda different, with the mention of the Goddess Rhiannon and one stupid Gavenmore ancestor. Liked it. There are some supernatural stuffs going on in the Caer Gavenmore. There is this environment I'm liking a lot. Eagerly waiting to find out how things bloom between Austyn the huggy manly bear (love the name, thanks to a certain review site) and Holly. :p

sigh is all I can say. Loved it til the end. Magical, with flaws and all.

Ah Austyn, babe! Love scenes were amazing, their chemistry and everything in between. The thing is that, whatever I thought about it in the beginning was proven wrong. After the disguise, I was so hooked that I finished it today. Holly was just as beautiful. I am jealous of you girl. :/

The epilogue (1st one I've read in TM's books so far) was really sweet. 6 girls! hahahahaha ... Sho shweet!! I really don't know how to explain it all. I just knew I'd give it a 5 star and it stayed that way. :)

Natalie says

I've read a few Teresa Medeiros books and I've always enjoyed them. Not that I'm saying this was the exception. However, I will be brief in my review of this book.

Overall, the book was a good read. I think the writing, as usual, is excellent. I must confess that midway through this book I started to get frustrated. I felt confused, because at least twice because it felt like the hero and heroine kept flip-flopping on feelings and their actions. It was a see-saw and I couldn't quite grasp what had just happened until I'd read on and took in more of the story.

I will say that the last pages of the book made up for any confusion and frustration I felt. Especially the epilogue. It gave me a good chuckle and I freely admit that having been able to smile at the end there, it washed away majority of my discontent, leaving me with a good feeling towards this book.

Corrine says

Holly de Chastel is the fairest woman in all of England during the 14th Century, and as such, she is constantly plagued with suitors. She's come up with some pretty inventive ways of keeping them at bay, and she comes up with what she thinks is her best idea when her father announces that her hand will be given to the victor of a tournament. Holly decides that she will discourage all the men by presenting herself as ugly. She hacks off her hair, blackens her teeth, pads her skirts, binds her breasts, and rubs nettle over her complexion.

None of this stops Austyn of Gaevenmore, however, who desperately needs her dowry. Actually she's just what he needs, because the men of Gaevenmore are cursed that a beautiful woman will always be their downfall, causing them to be violently jealous. Enough that Austyn's father strangled his mother when Austyn was only 9.

Holly's deceit, IMO, goes on way too long, over 200 pages in a 377 page book. Although it is nice to see Austyn come to love and desire Holly in her disguise, Holly knows from the beginning the stories of past Gaevenmore ladies' brutal deaths that this is probably not an issue to take lightly. She does anyway, and when Austyn finds out he has been duped, he reacts badly -very badly. Holding her head under water, ripping open her clothes, parading her half dressed through the village, locking her in a tower, and only coming to slake his lust when it's very dark out and he can pretend that it's just any woman he's with.

Neither protagonists are admirable: Holly is spoiled and childish, Austyn is brutish. They do have their better sides, but I think TM doesn't display them much partly because of the comedy aspect and partly to drive the story forward. The end was slightly redeemable, but after I set it down, I found I couldn't really forgive either of them for their actions. C

Anne says

Not a fan of the rapey books.

And that's probably my biggest (but not my only) problem with **Fairest of Them All**.

See, all I was hoping for was some fluffy romance-like stuff, and possibly a new take on Beauty and the

Beast.

For a few chapters, that's sort of what this was. Then this clanging warning bell went off in my head when the *hero's* inner monologue got a bit wonky. There were several other signs that things were careening from a quirky story to an icky story, but the writing wasn't awful, so I ignored them.

Holly is **beautiful**. Like, *the most stunning* thing ever born.

EVER.

EVEREVEREVEREVEREVEREVEREVER!

No other woman in the world can compare with her beauty.

And she has awesome tits to boot! I know this, because it's mentioned on just about every page. Even Holly can't stop touching her boobies, *that's* how fuckin' awesome those bad-boys are.

Holly=Perfection

Got it?

Holly keeps finding new and creative ways to get rid of suitors. Webbed toes run in the family, she has the pox, every other generation of women is insane (and her mother was fine), etc...

Holly's father wants her to marry. She's 18. It's time.

He sets up a tournament so that men can come from far and wide, and win her hand.

Enter Gavenmore.

He's under a curse. There's a whole backstory to it, but the short version is that every man in his family is doomed to fall madly in love with...and then kill...a beautiful woman.

So why was he even entered in this tournament? He gets pissed at Holly for tricking him into thinking she was ugly, but he's the IDIOT who entered a tournament to marry the MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN ENGLAND!

There are a lot of plot holes like that, but I could have ignored them if this story hadn't drifted into rape-is-cool territory.

Anyway, in a effort to dissuade any suitors, Holly chops off her hair, blackens her teeth, uses soot to give herself the illusion of a mustache, pads her clothes...and binds her gorgeous knockers.

So.

Guess who ends up winning her hand in marriage?

Ok, all of that has the makings of a really cute story.

Until about halfway through, there's a lot of funny/cute moments where these two start to fall for each other by building a friendship.

Awwwww!

Then *this* happens in a lake:

(view spoiler)

Fuck that! It's Stockholm Syndrome. Nothing about *him*, or *anything* he did was **remotely** acceptable. I was not pleased by any of the feeble excuses that the author stuck in there to excuse his behavior.

No.

No, to all of that shit.

PS

Even without all of that, this would have only been 2.5 star book, because there were enough plot holes to drive a truck through.

Shay says

Well, this is one of those books my "BFF" gave me because she just wanted to see my reaction. About two weeks after she gave it to me she says: "So...did you read that book I gave you?" I very dryly commented yes and didn't say anything else and I looked away. And when I glanced at her, she was staring at the floor. And finally after a very long pause and a ton of uncomfortable feet shuffling, she asks me what I thought. I skillfully avoided the question until my dear friend pinned me down and asked about "the scene." Now I'm not going to go into detail about said "scene" because if you've read this book you absolutely know what I'm talking about.

Anyway, the bestie and I have never spoken of this book again and maybe sometime in the next 10 years or so I will be able to forgive her for knowingly giving me this book. Yes, my best friend used my love of reading against me and punked me - the heifer. On the good side of things, I passed the "see your best friend isn't a total perv" test.

All I can say is: You shouldn't have gone there, Ms. Medeiros. You. Shouldn't. Have. Gone. There.

Susan says

I'm not sure what to write about this book. Parts I really liked, others not so much. Holly was vain and childish, Austyn was brutish and single-minded. The story went on and on and not much happened.

Don't get me wrong - I love T. Medeiros as an author but this was not one of her better books.

Jean says

Ohhhh boy. Where to even begin with this one? At the beginning, I suppose: Not the beginning of the book, but my rocky relationship with Ms. Medeiros as an author. The thing is, she has a wild imagination, and her plots are usually her strength. I would read her novels as straight up fantasy or science fiction or horror, if they'd been written that way, because the plots are insane, in the best way.

So, these are all compliments, right? Why worry? Well... I read a reviewer recently say that she's sort of one of the originators of new romance as well as being one of the last great bodice rippers. This is true. And

while she has a lot of deftness mixing them, she does also carry a lot of the baggage of the worst bodice ripper tropes. I've referred quite a bit to a book as a worst-case romance scenario without calling out the book itself: I'm doing that here, and saying it was Medeiros' *Shadows & Lace*. This was worse. Somehow, this book defied logic, reason and sanity, to outdo that book in terms of badly behaving so-called heroes.

It's not a surprise to her fans (of which I am firmly one; two of her books even sit on my favorites shelf). She's hit or miss with this sort of thing, and I sometimes even excuse her badly-behaving males because the book is otherwise so good. I'd read a review that flagged this book for its BBM. And I decided to read it anyway, because I had been enjoying one of her other fairy tale retellings, *Charming the Prince*, so very much. I was so wrong.

The plot is fairly cringe-worthy to begin with: Holly de Chastel is gorgeous beyond the telling of it, and so spoiled, you will want to hit her. She sabotages every attempt her father makes at marrying her off, and this actually ought to be sympathetic, since the idea behind it is that she's tired of disgusting older men who primp and paw at her because of her ASTOUNDING BEAUTY and see her simply as a pretty prize to take and to have. Enter: Sir Austyn of Gavenmore, who is under a terrible curse that makes the men of his family... marry unbelievably beautiful women and then kill them out of jealousy when they inevitably use their beauty to commit infidelity? Huh. Yeah, that's pretty much it. Holly, thinking to scare him off, disguises herself as homely, as as you can imagine, given his, erm, "problem," this only attracts Austyn. (The basic premise is actually stunningly similar to *Charming the Prince*--what a difference details like characters and motivation can make!)

We spend fully half of the book with Holly in disguise. Which was nice in conception, I think, because the idea was to see them fall in love, without her beauty as a factor. But it also made me tense, because you know that when it was revealed, things would not go well. Also, no hanky panky. Hey! I like my erotic romances!

And things go badly. Things go worse than I could have imagined. To the point where Holly revealed herself to Austyn, it had been mildly boring; her character had been annoying bordering on a change to charming, and Ausyn had been a bit hopeless, sweet, funny, cute. So imagine my shock when, after storming away from Holly and her revelation and declaration of love, he returns to find her washing her costume off in the river. He proceeds to shove her head under the surface to the point of drowning her, letting her come up for air, and doing it again. And again.

In her review of the movie "Splash," famed cinema critic Pauline Kael talked about the "true love test," and how the inevitable betrayal in stories means that one or more of the lovers has "failed." This goes so far beyond failing, I don't even know what to call it. And it doesn't end there! In her soaking wet shift, he drags her through his castle, in front of his household, with the SOLE PURPOSE of humiliating her and turning his friends against her. It works, as they remain hard-hearted, at first, to the fact that he then locks her in the tower where his grandmother jumped after being locked in by his grandfather, and raped nightly by him, and where his own mother was strangled by his father in a jealous rage.

She is understandably emotionally down for the count here. But soon, she gets up, dusts herself off, and begins to plan to "win him back." Because that's the lesson in these things. **Man does something spectacularly awful. Blames dark past. Instead of spending the rest of the story trying to win the woman, and making it up to her, the woman has to suffer his ongoing horrific behavior to prove to him how worthy HE is.**

... BULLSHIT.

He tries to claim that she's been adulterous with the friend who's accompanied her, and throws him in the dungeon. He keeps the maid she's brought with her away. In other words, he isolates her from everyone and everything that might be of even a little comfort. But she shows she's spunky! She's resourceful. And for some totally unexplained reason, she's still in love with him.

So, he succumbs to her charms and her seduction, and he rapes her. Naturally, it's an erotic rape, because she really wants it, as it turns out. Because that's what someone worthy of true love would do. That's sarcasm, by the way. Instead of being horrified, her maids come in the next morning hiding coy smiles, while Holly herself very calculatedly uses it to her advantage and hangs the sheet out her window, so he can't have the marriage annulled after using her. I think we're supposed to find all of this cute, and humorous. I did not.

He works to devalue and frighten her so much that by the time his father--yes, the father that killed his mother, is still living with him in the castle, because Austyn is excusing his behavior with ZOMG IT WAS THE CURSE! as well--tries to force himself on/strangle Holly, she's so worried about his reaction, she scrambles to cover herself and begs him not to punish his friend, who ran to save her, for seeing her naked; it was her own wanton fault. She's lying on the floor, half-strangled, clothes torn from attempted sexual assault. The book has the good grace to make this a dirty realization for Austyn.

But that's part of the problem. Everything he realizes about himself, he keeps internally; he shares nothing with her, when he changes his mind or way of thinking. And so there's no way for her to understand that she's changed him, and that he's understanding that his own behavior was been deplorably unforgivable.

So, she's nearly been strangled to death. She'll live with the horrible wounds for the rest of her life, right? A nearly crushed throat, bruises? But, wait! He kisses her, and her neck wounds... supposedly just disappear? I read this passage a few times to try to understand what was happening, if she was just not seeing them anymore, because he's finally kissed her on the mouth and she's delirious with love? Or if it's something allegedly magical (I realize now that I haven't mentioned that, despite the fact that these are fairy tale retellings/mash-ups, they're mostly historical/medieval romances, taking place in the real world, with plenty of anachronism.) But that felt too easy, either way. NO! Let him face one of the consequences of his actions, and that is permanent damage/harm to the person he supposedly loves.

So, he decides to save her the heartache and send her back to her father, and have the marriage annulled nevertheless. Because the best way to deal with the problems your actions have created is to get rid of them and ignore them. He seems SHOCKED by his crazed, homicidal father's confession that he "unfairly" killed his mother, after forcing her to sleep with another man and then succumbing to jealousy; he's shocked by the revelation that his family's mythical curse is a lie, a ruse to cover and excuse the men's disgusting behavior... you know, even though Holly's only tried to tell him this for the entire of the second half of the book. He decides he really LOVED HIS MOTHER! (now that she's in the clear) and really LOVES HIS WIFE (even though she has no reason to ever want him within twenty miles of her again).

And, naturally, he has to ride to save her from one of the scorned suitors from the beginning of the book. And shows a fuckload of astonishingly misplaced entitlement in declaring Holly HIS WIFE!

While I couldn't fucking care less about the plot or most of the characters at that point, I was not without the ability to be offended. And I was. I was very lucky this was an e-book, because I wouldn't have even wanted to touch a physical copy of this novel by the end. Did they live happily ever after? Eh, whatever. Done and done.

Clio says

This is the first book by Teresa Medeiros that I've read and it was great! The characters are fresh and well drawn and the plot is very romantic with an element of the supernatural. The author captures the medieval setting perfectly. The thing I liked best about this book was the humor injected into it. Holly is hilarious in her dealings with Sir Austyn who is as serious as a grizzly bear. The love scenes in this book are amazing. Holly is one of the best romance heroines.

Umaiya ?A Far Off Memory? says

Initial rating: Low 3 stars.

Revised rating: Low 2 stars

I went into this all bright eyed with wonder. Teresa Medeiros is another one of my old-school feel good authors and I can't even begin to tell you all the feels Goodnight Tweenheart left me. So I was pretty much shattered when I finished this.

All was not fair. It was dark. It was very dark coming from Teresa.

It felt like Disney never happened.

Like finding out The Little Mermaid was not all songs and HEA originally.

I mean, this hurt.

"This wasn't a romance!" she says accusingly.

I wanted fluff and wooing and dreamy sighs.

bursts into tears

"I can't e-even." she tries to say all blubbery.

Check out Anne's review for a more eloquent response to the story.

RTC when I'm no longer sick. *coughs out a lung*

Katherine says

The hero and the heroine were both exasperating at times. Her more than him, but somehow it worked for me. I really enjoyed reading this book.

Stephanie says

This one was sort of flat. I didn't like the characters, and didn't really care if they ever worked it out or not.

Gerrie says

The other reviewers have quite skillfully described the story, so I don't feel that I need to. I like Ms. Medeiros. She's a talented author, and she tells a good story. However, I had problems with both of the main characters. For the first third of the book, I found the heroine to be bratty, spoiled, and inconsiderate. She acted rashly, with little thought to the consequences of those actions on others. By the second third of the book she begins to mature, comes to understand that some of her rash actions have distressed others, and she works to become a better person.

Throughout the first third of the book the hero is delightful - gentle and thoughtful towards the heroine, tolerant of her bratty behavior, and very engaging. Then, in the second third of the book, just as I start warming up to the heroine, and believe that she has grown into the person who deserves the hero, the hero starts acting like a total and complete jerk. He does truly mean and inexcusable things to the heroine, and his seemingly tortured background and family curse does not excuse his behavior. Her bad behavior had gone on too long. Then his bad behavior goes on for too long.

I put this book down several times, and was going to mark it DNF. But, as I said, I like this author, so I kept reading on. In the last quarter of the book, the hero and heroine finally both evolved into likable characters I could care about. But it took almost three quarters of the book for that to happen. So, I rounded my rating up to three stars, from the 2.5 I would give this book if that rating was available.

Ronyell says

I have read many books by Teresa Medeiros before, but never have I read a book that was as full of dark passions and trickery as this book! "Fairest of Them All" is a romance novel by Teresa Medeiros which details how a young woman's desire to get out of marrying any guy gets out of hand when she ends up being married to a rough Welshman! "Fairest of Them All" has all the drama, dark romance and lies that will set any romance novel fan's hearts aflutter!

Holly de Chastel was known as the fairest woman in all of England since her beauty cannot be rivaled by any other. However, when her father decided to hold a tournament so that way she can be married to a man, Holly decides to put on an ugly appearance to repel all the men from marrying her. However, Holly would never have guessed that a dark and handsome Welshman named Sir Austyn of Gavenmore would end up winning her hand in marriage and the world starts changing for Holly. Holly soon realizes that her new husband Austyn has dark secrets that make him evasive from her and what will happen if Austyn discovers Holly's deceit?

Oh my goodness! This romance novel was one hectic ride as it has levels of lies and deceit between this couples that cannot be rivaled with any other romance novel! Teresa Medeiros has certainly done an impressive job at writing this story as it is intense from the very beginning and I love the way that Teresa Medeiros builds up the action throughout this novel as I was literally on the edge of my seat trying to figure out what is going to happen to the characters next. What I really loved about this novel are the characters themselves (even though they have their flaws that annoys me a bit) and Teresa Medeiros wove these characters brilliantly as we were able to see all the things that they have suffered through and how they try to stay strong during their troubling situations. Holly de Chastel might have spent the majority of the book deceiving her new husband, but she is shown to have a good heart and is willing to tell people what is on her

mind, even if it puts her life in jeopardy and it was that aspect of her character that I really enjoyed! Sir Austyn of Gavenmore is definitely one hero who is both frightening yet ultra handsome and dark at the same time! I loved the way that Sir Austyn is extremely gentle with Holly when she put on an ugly appearance to steer him away, which proves that Sir Austyn not only judges Holly on her looks but he judges Holly on her character and personality. It was interesting and terrifying at the same time to see Sir Austyn occasionally break out into a temper tantrum since he can be a really frightening person when angered and I will admit that I was shocked at some of the things he did to Holly in this novel. I was also head over heels in love with Sir Austyn's large and muscular body which really made me really want to be in his arms in this book!

For anyone who does not like sex scenes, there are a couple of sex scenes in this novel that are a bit graphic, so it would be best to skim over these scenes if anyone is uncomfortable with them. One of the problems I had with this book is that Holly is often deceptive towards Austyn throughout this book when she put on an ugly disguise to get out of marrying him. To be honest, I was glad that Holly did not keep up this deception throughout the entire book and only kept up with it midway through the book, but it was a bit annoying to me that she did not just tell Austyn about her disguise near the beginning of the book instead of letting it drag on for so long.

Overall, "Fairest of Them All" is a clearly brilliant book about lies and deception that romance fans will fall head over heels in love it for many years!

Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog

Gemma says

I was done with this book when the heroine throws an honest-to-goodness temper tantrum, complete with shrieking, thrashing, and banging of fists. That's the behaviour of a five-year-old, not a grown woman.

Pamela Shropshire says

Sir Austyn of Gavenmore is a Welsh knight, "one of the most dangerous and powerful warriors in all of Wales." The males of his family are cursed, doomed to marry beautiful but faithless women. His grandfather imprisoned his wife in a tower for years, raping her every night; finally, she jumped out the window. Austyn's father strangled his mother because he thought (wrongly) that she had cheated on him.

We're told he's a skilled knight, yet never in the book do we see him training. Pretty much all he ever does is mope around playing chess and bemoaning his fate (the King has stripped his title) and the curse. It was annoying. He's a knight, the equivalent of David Beckham. Dude, you gotta train every day to stay in shape.

Holly Felicia Bernadette de Chastel. Ok, my first bugaboo. Holly as a name for a woman in medieval England? No. Don't buy it. Anyway, Holly is the most beautiful woman ever. EVER. Men have been wanting to marry her for years because of her beauty. She has devised ways of making herself undesirable. I actually liked this plot point. But it goes on WAY TOO LONG and when Austyn finds out, he goes ballistic. Like, he tries to drown her. Eh. Not cool.

And then the whole thing about locking Holly in the tower. IDK, she's pretty annoying herself - I might have been tempted to lock her in a tower myself. But again, it went on way too long.

So both main characters were annoying. The secondary characters were nothing special. Holly's father was annoying and spoiled her, giving her pretty much anything she wanted. The villain did what villains do - abducted Holly and lured Austyn into a trap and threatened to rape Holly in front of him.

Holly and Austyn pretend they hate each other in extremely melodramatic speeches. When de Leggett is about to attack her, Holly throws herself out the window, Austyn pulls his manacles out of the wall and whips one of the chains around de Leggett's neck, killing him. Oh, but Holly isn't dead; no, she grabbed the ivy growing on the tower.

THEN Holly's father shows up with his army, and Austyn's men and serfs show up armed with pitchforks and shovels. Everyone goes over to Dad's house. And then in the epilogue we learn that Holly and Austyn's eldest daughter was conceived that night and they named her Ivy.

This is not a book that I will reread.
